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Snarl of a Cynic:

A RHYME.

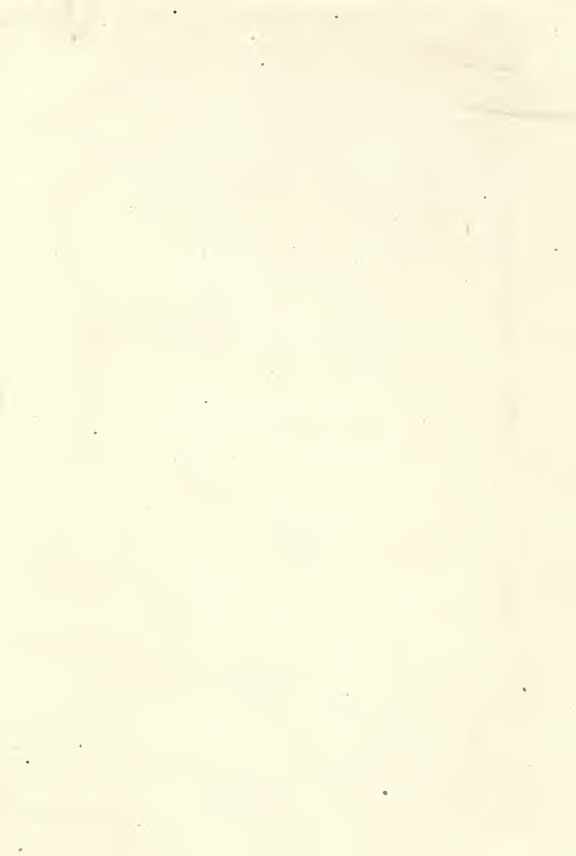
BY

BENNEVILLE OTTOMAR HOFFMAN,

A Pennsylvania Teuton.



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SNARL OF A CYNIC :

A RHYME.

BY

BENNEVILLE OTTOMAR HOFFMAN,
A PENNSYLVANIA TEUTON.



EPHRATA, LAN. CO., PA. :

P. MARTIN HEITLER,
Printer and Publisher for the Author.

1868.

ENTERED according to the Act of Congress, in the year
1868, by P. MARTIN HEITLER, in the Clerk's office of the
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MY *FIRST* REASON FOR RHYMING.

[My second reason for rhyming, of a serious cast, will be given, if opportunity offers, on a future occasion.]

 OLKS say, that I, nor bard nor dunce,
Will rhyme;—I answer without spleen,
A village bard did hire me once
To turn the crank of his machine.
That *turn* I never can forget,
The thing is sticking in me yet.

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PRINTER'S INTRODUCTION.



It may be considered fatuity for an obscure country printer, to undertake to publish a work in rhyme, when wealthy city publishers, with extensive connections and influence, hesitate to undertake a work of the same character, unless it is by an author of established reputation. The printer has undertaken the present work at his own pecuniary risk. Should it prove an utter failure, there will be some pecuniary loss to the printer. Although he is no opulent country gentleman, yet he is sufficiently able to abide the loss that may occur; and thereafter smoke his cigar with equanimity, entertaining no feeling of regret, except what may arise from his sympathy with the author. Such failure may teach the author, that if he attempts to enter the temple of literature hereafter, he should select a better usher than an obscure country printer.

The printer thought, perchance the public might be inclined to purchase and read a work by one of that class of native Americans, known as the "Pennsylvania Dutch," a peculiar class of people, of peculiar habits and customs, and perhaps of peculiar turns of thought;—perchance that the rhymings of a "Pennsylvania Teuton," might be a novelty to the reading public, and thus, by a stroke of fortune, remunerate the printer for his otherwise hazardous undertaking.

In various parts of the "Snarl," the printer has suppressed in all, eleven stanzas.

SNARL OF A CYNIC.



Ah ! who can tell how hard it is to climb
The steep where Fame's proud temple shines afar ;
Ah ! who can tell how many a soul sublime
Has felt the influence of malignant star,
And waged with fortune an eternal war ;
Checked by the scoff of Pride, by Envy's frown,
And Poverty's unconquerable bar,
In life's low vale remote has pined alone,
Then dropped into the grave, unpitied and unknown !

BEATTIE'S MINSTREL.



ONE eve, when Winter ruled as king,
The snow-flake fell on land and town,
Like feather from a seraph's wing,
Slow dropping down.

That winter eve of falling snow

I climbed the mountain's craggy slope,
To visit there a man of woe,—
A misanthrope.

The world had somehow used him ill,
He had no money and no wife,
No friend except a whisky swill,—
Oh bitter life!

A pale-faced, unsuccessful man,
And of a sullen, cynic mood,
Whose mind to much to reverie ran
In solitude.

His sullen scowls with anger rife
I faced ;—my wish to ease his dole,
To pour some sunshine on his life,
Balm in his soul.

My wish was vain that winter day,
For bitter feelings stirred his soul,
And thus he poured his cynic lay,
And rhyme of dole :—

“Your home ’s a rich manorial hall,
Your study room is snug and cosy,
You’ve health and fortune, friends and all,—
Your life is rosy.

I, living in this cabin rude
With you to-night will hold a parle,
And in my misanthropic mood
Must let me snarl.

You drink rich wines of France and Spain,
With love and pleasure you are frisky,
But I, to deaden thought and pain,
Drink cheap, bad whisky.

The aspirations of the boy,
The lofty hopes of manhood’s day,
My splendid dreams of fame and joy
Have passed away.

I dream no more of household glee,
Of joys of offspring, home or wife,
Alas! sad destiny for me,
Rude, sordid life.

The confidence of youth is gone,
My faith in manhood passed away,
I see the false, and those who fawn,
Must gain the day.

And wealth is gained by venal men
With tricks of trade profound and sly,
Who know to fawn and cringe, and when
To tell a lie.

Through slimy ways without fatigue,
Through crooked paths in thieves' disguises,
The worldly shrewd by keen intrigue
Will grasp Life's prizes.

The honest man whose soul hath scorned
The guile of those whose hearts are rotten,
Must live obscure and die unmourned,
And be forgotten.

The demagogue hath honor's post,—
How smooth his tongue! how false his heart!
That base-born wretch can use the most
Consummate art.

In every land beneath the sky
The demagogue 's a curse and bane ;—
'T is mild to say his honesty
Is tramontane.

When burns within the brain, a mind
Repressed by poverty or fate,
To preach content is idle wind,
An idle prate.

Men preach content, but all in vain ;
'T will do for an unlettered hind,
But not when seethes within the brain
Immortal mind.

Who sing content and rural ease,
The charms that poor men's cots embower ?
They are the men whom wealth doth please,
The men of power.

When such superior joy 's beheld
In poor men's huts, 't is strange the great
Will not forsake until compelled
Their splendid state.

Men live on earth for happiness,
And if high station gives it not,
Then leave the palace tenantless,
And take the cot.

Let sage philosophers forbear
To preach content, since it is known
Their neighbor's woes they better bear
Than griefs their own.

But 't is all humbug,—part of that
Machinery which holds the boor,
A subject to th'aristocrat
Because he 's poor.

Alone through long, drear winter nights,
I sit and mope the hours away,
While men in cities see fair sights,
Or hear the play.

No pavement clean for vulgar swains,
Or lighted street on winter nights,
But miry roads and gloomy lanes
For rustic wights.

These long, long winter nights are lone,
To poor men that on mountains dwell,
When o'er the roads snow drifts are blown,
Impassable.

They cannot reach the distant inn
For rustic gossip, talk and joke,
Amid its fumes of rum and gin
And potent smoke.

There pipes are smoked by each rude clown
As he the smutty jests doth bandy,
Pipes strong in smell, they would knock down
A Boston dandy.

We poor are knaves, or fools, or liars,
Our life a desert in eclipse,
Ours, dingy rooms, gross food, bad fires,
And tallow dips.

Contentment preachers teach not me,
While snug in your warm cosy rooms,
You read fine books, fine pictures see,
Mid rare perfumes.

The dainty bards in song and lay

With gold pens praise their lowly neighbor
Who toils and sweats, and bravely say
They honor labor ;—

But ride in coaches, idle still,

To work too lazy, or not able,—
But will they groom the horses ? will
They clean the stable ?

And do they know the poor man's lot

So cosy in their splendid state ?—
They talk and fume—the worth is what ?
Mere foolish prate.

This prate—though there are fools who cheer it,

I dread it more than spook or comet ;—
It makes my belly ache to hear it,
And I could vomit.

Your parson says he honors labor,

With mien impressive and demure,
But does he help his lowly neighbor
To cart manure.

Ah no! such work is quite too sweaty,
On sweltering days his ease in shade is,
His soft white hands are very pretty,
Just like a lady's.

In his snug room, he 'ill pick the spice
From Horace, Virgil, Caesar, Livy,
But ah! his nose is far too nice
To clean the privy.

We poor are drunkards, sots and scum,
The rich are not so lowly sunk,
On potent brandies they become.
Genteely drunk.

The poor receive foul jibes and spurns,
And vulgar shifts the bard annoys,—
It scathed th'imperial mind of Burns,
And sapped his joys

'T is sad to feel, that kings of rhyme,
Proud bards, the godlike men of earth,
Should be so poor in their life's prime,
And feel a dearth ;

A dearth of wealth that dunces hold,
That wealth that bards know how t' enjoy,—
Yet strange that gold, to fool is doled,
Or idiot boy.

The poor with toils are sore and spent,
The healthy rich have amplest leisure
To drink from fountains of content
And wells of pleasure.

In shining carriage, velvet lined,
The rich man drives the pleasant road
O'er hill and dale with blissful mind,
Dressed a la mode.

Poor men in rough and ragged clothes,
Must toil through miry ways of Time,
Ungarlanded by blooms of prose
Or wreathes of rhyme.

Fair maidens smile and greetings pay
To rich men riding through the park,
But at poor men in miry way
The dogs will bark.

Some say the rich have little measure
Of joy and health ;—'tis false I wot—
The rich have means for health and pleasure
The poor have not.

When rich men have nor joy nor health,
The fault is not in stars or elves,
Or destiny or precious wealth,—
'T is in themselves.

There 's wear and tear of life and health,
And sickening trades the poor destroy,
So that the happy sons of wealth
May earth enjoy.

The rich man reads in healthful air
Amid the mountain's cool retreat,
Or in high room on easy chair,
Or arbor seat.

The plodding trades are but a fen,
Where foul diseases all are rife ;—
Statistics show that gentlemen
Have longest life.

The gentleman is unconfined
With God's pure air for inspiration ;
He uses limbs, and uses mind
In moderation.

'T is varied exercise and mirth
Developes strong-limbed cavalieros,
Brings out the strongest men of earth,
Her stalwart heroes.

'T is not in health the poor are strongest,
They cannot choose work's proper measure,
The gentleman doth live the longest
With work *and* pleasure.

The rich are straight, erect in pose,
No stooping work for sons of wealth,—
And then well dressed, in clean fine clothes—
How good for health !

I would be rich, so I could dare
The mountain heights to make me strong,
So I might bloom in light and air
The whole day long.

I would be rich, so I could gloat
On paintings and fine pictured books,
Have fountains, vases and a boat
To skim the brooks.

I would be rich, for explorations
Of glens and nooks and mountain springs,
And fanciful investigations
Of dainty things.

I would be rich, so I could roam
O'er pleasant lands of old renown,
To see cathedral spire or dome,
In some old town,

Or ancient castles by the Rhine,
Or galleries of wondrous art,
Or mountain convent, holy shrine,
Or sea-side mart.

Or in Manhattan write my verse
To tickle maids or stalwart men,
Write roundelays, both sweet and terse,
This done, and then

For relaxation seek my cronies,
Or else some hours before 't is dark,
In shining phaeton drive my ponies
Through Central Park.

To rich men all respect is due,
Their garb and gold fair maids bewitch,—
And for judicial justice too,
One should be rich.

I would be rich with power to bless,
To help the poor in all their need,—
O heavenly joy the fatherless,
To clothe and feed!

But more than all, I would be rich,
To help true genius in his gloom,
To place his name in fame's proud niche,
And loftiest room.

Poor men must work, nor stop to sit,
At times propitious for romance;—
But wealthy poets may permit
Their mind to glance

Through Fancy's realms and Memory's rooms,
And through Imaginations halls,
When witching, sunny light illumes
The frescoed walls.

I would not lose, if fate were kind,
One glorious day beneath the sun,
And not like servant cribbed, confined,
In kitchen dun.

The poor men are debarred by fate
From possible and actual lives,
From travel, pageants, lore, estate,
And pleasant drives.

The rich man walks by fragrant meads,
By shady woods or clover blooms,
Or in arm-chair his paper reads
Mid well lit rooms.

Poor men must work mid damps and chills,
Mid nauseous smells as foul as tombs,
By scorching fires, or dusty mills,
Or stifling rooms.

Must stand with danger front to front
In painting tall cathedral spires,
Or in the war must stand the brunt
Of foemen's fires.

Steam-engines may explode, or fate
May strike with rank and poisoned air,
Or mines cave in to suffocate
The toilers there.

On land and sea the rich are blest,
For when by spicy isles we float,
The rich beneath silk awnings rest—
I row the boat.

And from the deck the rich behold
The arching sky or rolling waves,
But we poor devils in the hold
Are galley-slaves.

Victuals and clothes are bought with money,
And various joys on it dependent ;
Thus rich men's jokes are always funny,
Their wit resplendent.

Prints, pageants, pomps, the rich can see,
Hear operas, plays and farces,
We poor men toil and starve, and we
May kiss their ——

'Tis so ordained, as you conceive,
One wears a crown, one bears a thong;—
Perhaps, perhaps, but I believe
There 's something wrong.

The world 's bewitched by money's glare,
No matter how he did amass it,
The knave is honored everywhere
If he but has it.

E'en villages fond greetings give,
And welcomings as sweet as honey,
To those who come with them to live
With lots of money.

The city's dainty dames confound us,
And shrink from us the sordid poor;
The vulgar odors that surround us,
They can't endure

Proud fashion's belle, th'aristocrat,
May sneer at country pans and *kittles*, *
Though proud her mouth, yet into that
She puts the victuals.

Your queenly belle in all the climes
From far Alaska to Chaldea,
Like vulgar girls will have sometimes
A diarrhœa.

Well dressed and rich, I would not be
The butt of any damsel's snickerings,
But more than all, I would be free
From sixpence bickerings.

The poor have brawls for little things,
And which a sixpence would set right ;—
Necessity brings quarrelings,
For life they fight.

* The Cynic here followed the vulgar pronunciation, no doubt to render the rhyme perfect. The Lexicographers spell and pronounce it differently.

These vulgar strifes the poor endure
In villages without remissness,
Where Mrs. Grundy dwells secure,
And hath much business,

Is worm-wood to a soul refined
That rasps the spirit quite away,
That lowers the standard of the mind
And glooms the day.

The wit is trite, and lame and tame,
Of your unmoneyed village dandy,
Who says, that poverty's no shame,
Though quite unhandy.

Poverty yields no pleasing gifts,
Its toilsome sameness rives and tires,
It hath compelled, penurious shifts,
And cramped desires.

Envy and spite in force pervade
The hamlet's lowly ranks of life,
And chickens, pigs, that lots invade,
Produce great strife.

— He turned from me as from a spoiler,
As though, in his rude mountain den,
Some poor, imaginary toiler
Were present then.

He turned from me with haughtiness,
And souring memories o'er him broke—
He seemed to swell with bitterness,
And thus he spoke :—

“ You carried hod on sweltering days
To build a house for you now shut,
And tired, at night through alley-ways,
Slunk to your hut.

That house hath alcoves and recesses,
Bay-windows, where the soul is fraught
With poems full of tendernesses,
And fragrant thought.

Amid the arbors, still and shaded,
Upon some tranquil afternoon,
What wondrous poems could be braided
In dreamy June.

There, in that mansion proud and gay,
 Poor toiler, see the hundred lights !
By outside views, see pomp's array
 On gala nights !

You dare not tread those carpets soft,
 Nor talk beneath the chandeliers ;
Poor toiler ! there, you would be scoffed,
 A thing for jeers.

Yes, gaze upon the maidens there,
 Who waltz amid the parlor's glare,
Then back to your rude hut to share
 Its want and care.

Back to your wife, and tell your freaks,
 What you so sneakingly have seen,
And get her hate, as her heart speaks—
 ‘It might have been.’

We poor men toil and sweat, for which
 We get the world's disdain and spurnings,
And the result is that the rich
 Enjoy the earnings.

Can this be right? O heaven! I plead,
'T is not your work, but management
Of hireling priests of every creed
Who preach content.

And if the poor, who are the masses,
But knew their right, and dared assert it,
This earth would know nor castes nor classes
Which now pervert it.

Republics are, our own but is,
(What care I for your ridicule?)
A light advance on monarchies,
Or despot rule.

Ye toilers! be unswayed by priests,
Be unseduced by phrases sweet,
Be not the fools to make the feasts
That others eat.

Poor men submit to priestly hoaxing,
Receiving maxims with assurance,
Cozened by Paley's purchased coaxing
To grim endurance:

Paley was rich, well fed, and fat,
And had two thousand pounds a year,
But he was not content with that ;—
It doth appear

He wished a mitre on his head,
And ‘conscience he could not afford
To have.’ I’ve quoted what he said,
Let’s take his word.

A strong suspect my spirit stuns,
That there is lore I can’t attain,
The occult lore of chosen ones,
Who rule and reign.”

— Th’imaginary toiler woke
The Cynic’s fancies venomous,
And then to me again he spoke
In substance thus :—

“O parson! stop your prate and boast,
Don’t apotheosize the man
Who did not die at duty’s post,
In duty’s van.

Why thus disgrace your sacred gown
And be religion's empirics?
Why drag our high religion down
For politics?

Afraid to speak 'gainst sin and pride?
'Gainst impious men of high renown?
If courage fails, then throw aside
The sacred gown.

* * * * *

Poor and obscure are those who fought
Amid the ranks of great divisions,
Reward or fame were robbed or bought
By politicians.

And deeds were done of bravest sin
By privates poor that badly stank,
While coward dolts who had rich kin
Had general's rank.

Reports and papers puff and tell
Of wealthy dolts as brave and great,
When these same dolts the very smell
Of powder hate.

Privates return, though brave and skilled,
To natal towns without parade,
For them no fatted calf is killed,
No fuss is made.

The drunken colonel what awaits?
Or brigadier as dumb as mules?
Why, grand receptions, banquets, fetes,
And cheers from fools.

He went to war, a martial quack,
To steal, and not the foe to slash,
Patched up his character, came back
With fame and cash.

Came back with his rum-hued proboscis,
And character repaired anew,
To take his chance for some fat office,
And get it too.

Land of my birth! I love thee well!
Land of my sires! Land of the free!
No feeling can my bosom swell
Untrue to thee.

Yet I am sad our men run wild,
So shoulder straps can rule the roast,
While better men are thus exiled
From honor's post.

The clowns will fight and tear their hair,
Two office-seekers to promote,
When neither for the clowns doth care
Except their vote.

Our legislation is controlled
By rogues with fraud and shrewd devices ;
Law-maker's votes are bought and sold
At various prices.

The public good, my mind recalls,
Once moved the patriot's zeal and passion,
But now in legislative halls
Quite out of fashion.

The State 's a humbug top to toe,
And fraud and cunning are the winners,
Poor, honest men have not a show,
Let's call 'em sinners.

* * * * *

I want no fame, I'm poor, ill bred,
Farewell to fame! I cannot win it:
My purse like Jerry ——'s head,
Has nothing in it.

Put money in your purse, ye bards!
Be that the end of your ambition!
Then you can win the world's regards
And recognition.

A purse-proud dunce the patron may
Enact;—the price I'm sad to say it.
Is flattery, which some poets pay,
And let them pay it.

When fawning wins the dolt's regard,
And wins the patron with its spell,
Let fame's applause go to the bard
Who fawns so well.

Poor, simple race! you are forestalled,
You vainly strive at fame to clutch;—
I mean that race politely called
“Benighted Dutch.” *

Perhaps, 'tis true, my lyre doth squeak,
Since city club my song ne'er suffers,
That mutual admiration clique
Of well-trained puffers.

A school-girl, whose papa is rich,
(Important point,) writes silly chapters,
O'er which her clique will take a twitch
Of puffing raptures.

Her moony stuff, sans sense or pith,
Her wealthy friends will read and drone
In splendid parlors, scented with
Eau de Cologne.

* VIDE William C. Bryant's New York Evening Post of January 2, 1857, in which the Pennsylvania Dutch are held up to scorn as a benighted people, who must first be taught to read, ere they will know how to vote.

Her silly prose or sicklier rhyme
Are in her clique's newspapers printed,
And she is famous for the time
With puffs unstinted.

The school of Lakers, staid and prim,
Each other puffed, (did you e'er read it?)
Coleridge was one, alas! for him,
He did not need it.

The city cliques and coteries
Are mutual admiration clubs,
And cunning manufactories
Of famous grubs.

'T is true these grubs at death go down
From proud distinction's eminence,
But they through life enjoy renown
And consequence.

The bard from paths of fame withdraws,
Since there the grubs by thousands stray,
Impediments to worth, because
They clog the way.

'T is sad, that bards, the true elect,
Untasting fame, their worth unprized,
Remain for years in chill neglect,
Unrecognized.

A rustic youth, perchance quite poor,
Writes faulty verse, but bold, sincere,
His recompense but silence, or
At most a sneer.

Poor merit withers sad and lone
In cold neglect in this our land,
Because it gets no cheering tone,
No helping hand.

I'm soured, and I dare aver it,
I want the milk of human kindness,
When I perceive that cliques to merit
Affect a blindness.

My mood is fierce whene'er I see
The fulsome puffs on verses weak,
Whose writer is of high degree,
And hath a clique.

'T is then my mood is fierce, indeed,
I feel like having cliques uprooted,
Satirically pilloried,
Or executed.

I thought by merit all were rated,
My honest nature taught me so,
But I was unsophisticated—
Quite green you know.

The publisher can make the bard,
And buys the fame because it pays,
And humble worth is thus debarred
Of poet's bays.

Renown's enjoyed by empirics
Through Boston schemes in club and sect,
And that New Yorkers know the tricks,
I half suspect.

The city bards that hear the plays
Know cheap claptraps that shake the house,
While stronger bards by rustic ways
Can't smell a mouse.

We country bards are green as grass,
The elephant we never saw,
We never looked through opera glass,
We're much too raw.

In Fashion's ranks we never bloomed,
Or in gay garb displayed our parts,
Our handkerchiefs are unperfumed
Except by ——."

— He ceased his snarl. I knew my aid
Was useless for his mind's relief,
And as the night was late, I made
My answer brief:—

"Executive ability
You need. An indolence disgusting
Is your great fault. In privacy,
Your soul is rusting.

With smoke, and drink, and reverie,
You fritter precious life away,
Pass gloomy days, forego all glee,
And hate the gay.

Remember this, there are but few
That do not feel life's alternations ;
To days of joy, grim nights ensue
With lamentations.

When darksome night rests on the homes
By Huron's lake or Michigan,
The gorgeous day gleams on the domes
Of Ispahan.

Along this healthful mountain glen
Stern winter's glooms not always rest,
For bonny June will come again
In splendor drest.

Then dream along the woodland rill,
And fancies weave in mountain glen,
And you may build a rhyme that will
Astonish men.

Your soul hath far too much of hate
For politicians and the priests,
And envy for the nabob's taste,
And pleasure's feasts.

Your jaundiced eye all men hath clad
 With knavery, but you mistake them,
Bad men there are, but not all bad,
 As you would make them.

Your views of life are sadly wrong,
 And men and things to you unknown,
For honest men are in the throng,
 And on the throne.

There is one thing makes life sublime,
 That honest men to earth are given;
The noblest gift in realms of Time,
 This side of Heaven.

If you possess the poet's key,
 You can unlock, in soul enthrone them,
More pleasures in the woods you see,
 Than those who own them.

The arts, man's treasured heritage!
 Around life's pathway still must fling
Sweet blooms in this material age,
 When Trade is King.

The gracing arts can never die :—
Ply painter's brush, or poet's pen,
Or earth's a desert, or a sty,
Or savage den.

Faint not in life's important fight,
But put the hero's armor on,
And soon shall gleam in glory's light,
Thy gonfalon!

Mid all chagrins of this our life,
Though passions fume and rogues will plan,
Be honest, brave—in storm or strife,
Be thou a man!

O bard! let Right thy soul expand,
Guard well the earnest of thy youth,
Brave be thy heart and strong thy hand,
To strike for Truth!

Though Rank treats bards as underlings,
Yet their renown shall bloom, I trust,
When Bishops, Presidents, and Kings,
Are fameless dust.

True poets ne'er are disappointed,
Because shut out from rich men's feasts,
For poets are the Lord's Anointed,
And Truth's High-Priests."

— I ceased. He smiled with scornful leer
As though a school-boy had declaimed,
He looked as if I were small-beer,
And then exclaimed :—

"Your talk is rant and rigmarole,
Mere *ad captandum* froth and foam,
Which may deceive some silly soul
In famed Buncombe."

— I left him to his lonely cell,
Barren in love and fond caresses,
In my bright home to ponder well,
His bitternesses.

I briefly have condemned the strain
The Cynic used ;—although forsooth
His talk, my friends, is not in vain,
If it have truth:



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